

HF ing me. And we would sign up on the back of a photograph, and the fellow would have one printed and give it to us and so on. We exchanged photographs in other words, and then, when we got to the Olympic Stadium, there was a sort of a little shop there where they had photographs of the previous day's events. I don't mean that they just had them for a day before, but if you wanted a picture, you could almost invariably get it at the shop in the Olympic Village without any....

TS Were those professional?

HF Those were professional photographers, yes.

There's a picture here of Charlie Paddock (Sp.?), who at that time we called "The World's Fastest Human." I don't know whether people nowadays remember that name at all, but he was very famous in those days the way these sprinters are from the Olympics of 1924. And a very nice fellow. He was from California, and unfortunately he didn't win. He was supposed to win the Olympics in '24. He placed, but he didn't win, and he later was killed in a plane crash in Alaska.

MB Pat McDonald (Sp.?)--he was supposedly the biggest person there. What was he? Or, who was he?

HF Pat McDonald was a New York policeman, a typical type of New York policeman. As you say, he was probably the biggest man on the Olympic Team. He was a weight-lifter, I believe. I don't remember exactly what he did, but I think it was weight-lifting. And McGrath is--I don't remember what his first name is--was also a New York policeman. He was older, he had gray hair, but he was coming back to at least his second Olympic Games. He was also a weight man.

And this man is Avery Brundage who was an University of Illinois alumnus and was at that time on the American Olympic Committee. People nowadays remember him as being the International Olympics President, and he had a lot of controversy about him. Actually, the only thing you could say about Avery Brundage was that he wanted the Olympic Games to be amateur. He didn't like the idea of professional games. And they're trying to get them professional more and more nowadays. He was the one that fought that for years and years. I'm afraid he's not going to win, but he died a few years ago as you may remember.

MB He was in the Olympics in 1912. What did he--?

HF He was in the '12 Olympics, and I can't think offhand what he did. I think maybe a shot-putter or a javelin-thrower. He was a big, powerful man, and I'm pretty certain that it was a field event.

These are pictures of various teams from the Big Ten. There are the four of us with Avery Brundage, all being from Illinois. Ohio State. Is this Iowa?

TS Any famous names in those pictures? Besides yours?

HF Not that I think of offhand. One of the men who was as I understand Harold Osborne (Sp.?) from Illinois. Harold Osborne won two gold medals in 1924. He won the high jump, and he won the decathlon. That's a feat in itself. Later on he was the first man picked for the Hall of Fame for Amateurs, I mean not like the National Football League Hall of Fame, but there is one--I think it's in North Carolina. He was the first man that was picked for that.

MB Any feelings you had when you got to see land again after you'd been gone from it for a while?

HF I wouldn't say there are any feelings. We were overjoyed to be in France, and we looked at France and said, "This is where we're going to compete. Oh, isn't it fine!" In "Chariots of Fire" they showed the American team on the boat coming up to a dock and getting off and all the people on the dock cheering. That's all bourgeois! The America, the ship we were on, came to Cherbourg the way all the other ocean liners do--did in that day. There was no dock big enough to take an ocean liner, and they had to anchor out a quarter of a mile from shore, and then everybody was brought in by lighter to the dock. We got off the boat on to a small boat or lighter or whatever you want to call it and came in that way. We came in early in the morning. I think when we finally got on the lighter to get off the ship, it was six o'clock in the morning. The only people who were there were a couple of fishermen and a couple of fishwives. We had no cheers at all when we came on land! Cherbourg is a hundred miles or so from Paris, and we rode on a train to Paris.

The Olympic Committee wanted us to show off as much as we could. That's probably the best way of saying it, and we had these Olympic uniforms which we were going to wear in the Olympic parade. They were issued to us on the boat, and that morning they told us to put on our best uniforms which had a U.S. seal on the left breast. They were dark blue or black, and a straw hat with a red-white-and blue ribbon around the hat. We were supposed to wear those. They didn't do any good in Cherbourg, but when we got off at the station in Paris, we did arouse quite a little interest at least and some cheering, but there was nothing like there was in the movie, "Chariots of Fire."

When we got to Paris, we were surprised to find out that we did not go to the Olympic Stadium. Now, the Olympic Stadium had outside of it a sort of an Olympic Village, nothing like they build nowadays. They were just army--what do you call them? Little army huts, and the streets between the huts were mostly mud, or if it was not raining, they were dust! And it was a very unsightly sort of a thing to live in though most of the teams lived there. The American Olympic Committee rented a portion of the estate of a French nobleman about twenty miles west of Paris, and they put up very nice temporary dwellings where they had, I think, in each building four rooms, bedrooms. Each room had two Olympic athletes, and then, of course, they had the usual shower and facilities and also a kitchen and a dining-room.

TS In each section?

HF No, no. They had one big kitchen.

TS Oh, I see.

HF They had one big kitchen and dining-room and one big shower place, but the other were just in bedrooms.

TS How long were you in this facility before you went to compete?

HF Well, we were there all the time.

TS Oh, O.K. But how long were you there before the competition began?

HF Oh, I see. My diary would tell the exact time, but looking back I think it was about two weeks before the competition started. I'm sure we got there the latter part of June or very early in July, and I think the competition started about the middle of July.

TS Did you have any contact with the nobleman in the main house at all?

HF Well, since the nobleman was a nobleman of Napoleon's time, I didn't--no! It was a descendant of one of Napoleon's generals, and the answer to that is no, we had absolutely no contact with him. The only thing we had with the main house--they brought all of us up. And there was a long portico along the backside of this house. It was a big white building. It wasn't a castle, it was just a summer home, but they lined all of us up. There's a picture in here--I would say maybe two or three hundred athletes all lined up there together. I might say that the Women's Olympic Team did not stay out there. I have a feeling they wanted to be near a swimming pool somewhere, and I believe both the men's and women's swimming team were at a hotel in Paris because we never saw them. We saw them coming, and we saw them going. But that was it.

TS That doesn't sound like much fun.

HF No! What I mean, coming and going, was on the boat. We didn't see them in between.

TS O.K.

HF I did have one experience with Duke Kahanamoku, only it wasn't--the Olympic Committee had no objection to us sightseeing around Paris, just as long as we were reasonable about it. And we acted like most sightseers. At one time three or four of us decided to go up to the top of the Eiffel Tower, and we went up and got there. I saw a bunch of fellows with our type of uniform on, and I recognized some of them as the swimming team. So, there was Duke Kahanamoku, and I said, "How are you, Duke? How are you doing?" or something like that. He said, "I'm doing fine, but I'm not Duke, I'm his brother!" See, any Hawaiian could compete on the team. I mean they were good enough, and so Duke and his brother were on the team.

This--well, that's the building we were--oh, maybe a quarter a mile away from the building. And this was the little town. It had a very nice rose garden there.

- HF And as I said, we went sightseeing around Paris, including the Casino de Paris. We had a bus that would leave our camp and go down to the Champs Elysees where in a hotel the American Olympic Committee had their Paris office. At night--in the afternoon they'd bring the bus back. Then, of course, they had to have a bus connection to the Olympic Stadium, which was about twenty miles away. So, we had to go practically every day to the Olympic Stadium because we--while we had a straightaway, the people that owned the home there allowed us to take a lane and have it worked over and put gravel on it so it made a fairly good sprint thing, but that was only for the few days that the athletes didn't go down. And they had, of course, an outside stadium where you could practice anything you wanted to at the Olympic games outside of the Olympic Stadium.
- TS Could you describe what the--how much interest was there shown by the public in general in Paris and then around the rest of the world in the 1924 Olympics?
- HF Well, I don't know about the rest of the world, but I know that since the Olympic Committee asked us to wear our Olympic uniforms whenever we could go to Paris, we would get the high sign from strangers all the time. Everybody was friendly. There's no question about it, and we'd see other members of other Olympic teams with their uniforms on. And we'd speak to them sometimes. As far as the Olympic Stadium, it was not the big concrete stadium that you think of nowadays. It was a stadium very much like American football fields were in the 1920's before they started building big stadiums. I'm thinking now of Illinois, which had a stadium of maybe twenty thousand--all of wood. The Olympic Stadium in 1924 was all of wood. The chief difference is that most American stadiums had no roof on them, and the Olympic stadium had a roof. It was two sides, not either end, but two sides of the field which was about the size of a football field. And each side had a roof over it.
- TS Was there a lot of coverage by newspapers from around the world of the Olympics?
- HF Yes, very much so, and I would say that the French people, assuming that they mostly were the ones in the stands, were very enthusiastic. They weren't enthusiastic particularly about the French people, but about anybody--any athlete. It was a very good crowd, and I heard no, actually no bad talking at all of any kind.
- TS Did you have an actual training program prior to the competition then?
- HF Did I tell you that Amos Alonzo Stagg, who was our coach--he coached quarter-milers and half-milers--called us together when we got to Paris? I don't think he did this before, but when we got to Paris, he said, "You boys are all used to running, you know the way you run, you just go ahead and run the way you have before. That's fine with me, if you do an honest job of it." And I think only one man didn't live up to that work, and that unfortunately was Cord Taylor (Sp.?), who had won the American ones. And he was the one, if you remember, in "Chariots of Fire," an American falls down just about ten or fifteen meters from the

HF end. That was him; his legs just gave out. He just flopped on the ground and crawled across the line, to get fifth place.

TS So, you didn't really have a specific training program?

HF Well, I would say that we did in this sense that there were eight of us, and we did the same things. Almost any program that included sprints and full running would be reasonable in that case. I don't remember that we had any set program.

MB How about the coaching at the actual Olympics versus how they depicted things in the movie "Chariots of Fire"?

HF I might say that Amos Alonzo Stagg, who was a wonderful gentleman and I have enjoyed very much having known him, was not much of a coach. The one thing that he did--and I think maybe it hurt--was that he kept saying, "You've got four races to run--save yourself for the next race." And I told you earlier that Eric Wilson was a very good quarter-miler. Over the years I'd beaten him, and he'd beaten me. But he never got to the finals of the Olympics. I think it was just because he had saved himself in the earlier races, and somebody just came along and beat him! As for the coaches, the only one I really knew well was Stagg, but in "Chariots of Fire" they had these coaches ranting and raving around. I think they were just completely too flamboyant. They acted the way we see some football coaches acting, but track coaches just don't do that. They were much too flamboyant in the thing.

MB Were there any other things as far as comparison with the movie that you'd like to bring out that might be either exaggerations or inaccuracies or something?

HF Well, in the movie they described the coach for the quarter-milers who--they didn't try to put Amos Alonzo Stagg in there, just put "a coach" in. He is telling in the movie that "Don't worry about Eric Liddell. He's a sprinter, he'll tie up at the end, and he won't be able to finish the race." Which was what most sprinters in the United States did because they didn't realize that they could sprint for a quarter of a mile. Nobody told them they could sprint for a quarter of a mile, and nobody told Eric Liddell that he couldn't sprint for a quarter of a mile, which was the difference actually!

And they describe an American coach as telling, I think, the character that played my part, if I remember rightly, "Don't worry about Liddell; you can beat him at the end because he'll tie-up at the end." This is actually what the American athletes thought, and that's what beat them that day. That is perfectly good advice the way the coaching went at that time, but it was not good advice from then on because Liddell changed the whole running of a quarter mile. Nowadays, they sprint all the way, and the quarter-milers are trained sprinters! We were supposedly trained middle-distance runners. That makes quite a little difference.

MB As far as your, you know, ... of the training but into the fact of how you came in in the race, you'd had a world's record for a short time, didn't you?

MB As far as your, you know, ... of the training, but into the fact of how you came in in the race, you'd had a world's record for a short time, didn't you?

TS Oh, maybe we ought to go through the pictures and--

HF On the day of the quarter-mile race, or I should say the two days because it was a two-day program, we ran a preliminary and a secondary race on the first day, and then we ran the semi-final on the second day and the final on the second day. In each case, on each day the races were about two to two and a half hours apart. We had that much time to rest for the next race. On the first day of the preliminaries, I was wondering when I was going to be called because there were about seventy-five men. For some reason I happened to be one of the very last. In fact, I was in the last preliminary heat; and when we finally showed up, all that was left was myself and a Finnish runner, a runner from Finland. Well, we made each other understand that since there were two to qualify in every race and there were only two in our race that it seemed crazy to run the race. So, I went to the French official, and I made him understand--he could understand English better than I could understand French--that I didn't think we had to race at all, that we'd already qualified. And in French he said, "To heck you say! You better run, or you won't qualify!"

So, here was an Olympic Stadium with some twenty-five thousand people watching, and here the two of us got into our track and ran the thing. Naturally, we just jogged through it, and the stands were laughing and cheering us on because they knew what had happened that there hadn't been anybody else show up. At the end of the race I just took a couple of steps fast so I qualified first. The Finland fellow qualified second, but that's--he never got any farther than the second race. But that was it.

When I got through, now we ran about a fifty-two-quarter, which maybe in high school is pretty fast, but for Olympic athletes it's just practically jogging through, and Stagg said to me, "Why did you run so fast? Why didn't you save yourself for the next race?" I felt like saying that I was just warming up for the next race! And so the next round of races this fellow from Sweden, Imbock (Sp.), broke the world's record in his run, but I was in another heat so I didn't know anything about it particularly. That meant that there was one record holder coming into the second day of competition. In the second day of competition in the first race which was the semi-final of the whole series, I broke Imbock's record so I was the holder of the world's record in the semi-final heat. And everybody came around telling me that I would win without any trouble. I had heard of Liddell, but he had a slower time. He won his heat, but he had a slower time so that they kept saying that there's no reason for worrying about Liddell--you'll be able to beat him. I suppose I believed it all. Anyway, in the final race there was Imbock, a world's record holder--

TS Why don't you go to the picture; see if you can find the picture, and start over again. O.K.?

HF I was trying to pick up my train of thought. I won the semi-final heat on the second day, and then we had about two and a half hours for me to think about the fact that I had just broken the world's record in the thing. Now, the world's record nowadays--it's so much faster than it was then. My world's record was 47.8 seconds. Imbock's world record was 48 flat, and the world's record that Eric Liddell would break in the final heat was 47.6. Those aren't comparable to nowadays, but there is a lot of reason why--more efficient track and more training where we in those days trained while we worked. Nowadays they train for a year or so before the finals, and the one fact I've tried to reiterate here is that nowadays they know that the quarter mile is a sprint all the way, and these fellows are sprinters. In those days they thought of the quarter mile as a little distance race. And we were trained--coached to lay back in the middle, as we called it in those days "to coast in the middle of the race" and then speed at the start and a big burst of speed at the end, which I thought I could do with Eric Liddell.

Begin Tape 2, Side 3

HF They didn't do that at our banquet..., but it makes a good story.

MB So, then you came on back directly after your week in England?

HF We went back to our camp. It seemed logical because we had to wait for a certain time when the boat was due, and there was no place else for us to go. So, this was the last day at the camp, but it's after we went to England.

MB You went back to France and then came--

HF We went back to France, I should say. I don't know that there was anything particular about the trip back except for the fact that we had about half as many athletes and twice as many people along who were girls fortunately.

TS Did you get a good welcome when you went back, when you got back into the United States?

HF Well, we had a "Fifth Avenue" welcome. We had a parade up Fifth Avenue, and we went up to the steps of the New York City Hall. Mayor Highland (Sp.?), I believe his name was, at that time, gave a welcoming speech and so on. It wasn't anything like Lindbergh's, but it was still a very good thing. There was on the Olympic Team a high school boy, who was a sprinter on the Olympic Team, from the New York area. People began yelling his name-- I can't think what it was now, and the Olympic Team took it up. They said, "Rodney for mayor, Rodney for mayor, Rodney for mayor!" So, we marched down Fifth Avenue yelling that...!

MB Well, let's see. Loud speaker--I guess he's giving a speech or just showing off.

HF Oh, he's showing off, yes.